

EDITORIAL

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THE ETHICS OF THE PROFESSIONS AND OF BUSINESS.

THE May number of the *Annals* of the American Academy of Political and Social Science is devoted to the expression and betterment of the standards of business and professional conduct that guide men and women when engaged in making a living. The basic element of ethics is justice, hence the term has very extended application, as comprehensive as modern social, professional and business interdependence. Even if considered from a selfish standpoint the wisest thing to do for the individual is to "live the life" which coincides with his highest ideals of right, and to act accordingly in his relations with others. We quote the *Annals* in substance by saying, "To assure reliance and to state ideals the codes of ethics of professions and the newer ethical codes of business become of great public importance." Social progress, industrial expansion, and professional advance are limited by the standards of life and action.

The publication referred to has given about 300 pages to the subject under the editorial direction of Clyde L. King, and among the codes of ethics printed in part are those of the American Pharmaceutical Association and also "Principles of Pharmaceutical Ethics" as proposed at the last meeting of the Association by Ex-President Charles H. LaWall. The report of the Committee on the foregoing has been assigned a place on the program at the Cleveland meeting.

We take the liberty of reprinting the first two paragraphs of the editor's foreword and also the concluding paragraph which may have value for directing thought in shaping our revised code of ethics.

"Codes of ethics are important agencies for social control. The complexities and the specializations of modern industrial life leave many individuals unable to judge whether or not a member of any profession has performed his services with due regard to the interests of all, as well as with due regard to the interests of his client. In all but the crassest and most obvious defaults in service standards the work of the physician must be judged by physicians (*that of pharmacists by pharmacists*)* and that of the lawyer, by lawyers. And so with each of the professions. The higher the skill, the greater the need for organized group effort toward maintaining a fine sense of obligations, not primarily to others in the same profession, but chiefly to the general well-being of all.

"Hence it is that the ideal of all the professions is public service and not monetary gain. The very opportunities for anti-social conduct call forth organized effort to taboo unprofessional conduct. The constructive aim of each of the professions must therefore be the public good. The member of each of the professions has as his means of livelihood the heritage of the ages in his science. His earning power and his opportunity for immortality of influence depend upon the careful work of countless predecessors. The training necessary to a mastery of

* Italics ours.—EDITOR.

a profession gives the opportunity, but not the reason, for enforcing high standards of conduct throughout the profession.

"Codes of ethics are the means by which groups keep their members socially victorious over self-aggrandizement. To survive, such codes must achieve a unity not of negation but of spirit—a spirit that consecrates life to the long-time interests of all through one's efforts while making a living."

A code of ethics questions the actions of an individual as to whether he is really living a life that justifies him in commending himself to himself, to his neighbor, to his profession, or business, to his association. Unless the ancient self-seeking by individuals is to become, under the modern necessity for organization, mere self-seeking by groups, the good of all should be kept clearly in mind, at all times, in framing and observing a code of ethics.

E. G. E.

THE PROBLEM OF CONSOLIDATION OF BOARDS.

IN adapting and adopting a quotation of the first editorial we stated, parenthetically, that in all but the crassest and most obvious defaults in service standards the work of the pharmacist must be judged by pharmacists. "And so with each of the professions. The higher the skill, the greater the need for organized group effort toward maintaining a fine sense of obligations, not primarily to others in the same profession, but chiefly to the general well-being of all."

Secretary H. C. Christensen, of the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy, strikes the key-notes in his contention that the members of a profession feel a greater responsibility for the condition of that profession, at any and all times, than others not directly concerned in it. And, in taking away such responsibility by legislation from a profession, the standing of that profession is affected adversely. The members of the profession lose interest, and the public will not receive the protection to which it is entitled. "The Consolidation of Examining Boards" was Mr. Christensen's topic before California State Pharmaceutical Association, and how it worked in Illinois was told by him in the May JOURNAL A. PH. A., p. 376.

As far as Secretary Christensen is informed the administration of the law under the consolidation of boards' plan is placed in the hands of a non-professional. But that makes little difference, the principle is wrong, it is not in accord with professional ethics. If the appointee is not a professional man, he has not the viewpoint of the professions; if he is, he belongs either to one or the other of the professions, and his leanings are to that one, at least he receives such credit, and this eventually produces dissatisfaction. To give the public best service the members of examining boards of the respective professions must be qualified practitioners, who are representative, responsible not only to the state but to the profession of which they are part.

The work of the pharmacist must be judged by pharmacists, thereby the obligations of pharmacy are more closely observed for the general well-being of all.

E. G. E.

EXPENSIVE PRE-JUDGMENTS.

AN informative communication relative to a case in court and a decision rendered in favor of defendants begins with the following questioning statements:

"How rarely right are our preconceived judgments or opinions. How often we jump to adverse conclusions without just cause and from failure to consider all available facts and, in our leaning to one side of the question or toward one course of action, how easily influenced by considerations which have no direct or essential bearing."

Everyone will admit the truth of these observations. The letter is without harsh comments, and the plaintiff is given sympathetic consideration, notwithstanding that a large expense was incurred by the defense. No matter how much money might have been saved by settling out of court, a defense was deemed mandatory for reasons that here require no explanation.

The purpose in mind, at this time, is not to enlarge on the case in question, but to emphasize the necessity for a code of interprofessional ethics, or even an extraprofessional code. The possible consequences of any false step or unguarded utterance cannot be predetermined; this applies to the acts of an individual, a profession, a business, and an association, and one to the other. Physicians realize what reflections on character mean; the reputation of pharmacy and pharmacists is frequently at stake, and because the press is not always careful in the censorship of news items concerning them. These statements could be extended but they are intended to be general and illustrative of a wider application. Many charges are the result of unguarded remarks, impressions of the individual and sometimes, if not often, selfish motives. When a case is disproved and charges unfounded it is unfortunate, because even then public confidence is shaken. From the latter viewpoint, results are worse if the case is proved. The following is abstracted from the communication referred to:

"Every physician knows, and every patient should be given to understand, that in any course of treatment there are, or may be, literally scores of unknown or uncontrollable factors which might affect the outcome. The attendant risks must be boldly faced. When unfortunate results do follow a course of treatment or the use of a product, it is patently foolish for the injured party to fly at the throat of the physician, or for the physician to attempt to shift the entire blame onto the product before obtaining and studying all facts bearing on the case. The resulting expenditure of time, energy and money is extremely wasteful and without benefit to any of the parties concerned. A full and frank review of all the facts of the case should be sought, with all three parties concerned cooperating. But such cooperation can only be had when it is made clear that a review of the facts is to be used only in arriving at an honest, fair and mutually satisfactory adjustment. This is not possible where one or two of the three parties assume a blameless position and force the third into a defensive position."

The good of all should be kept clearly in mind, at all times, in framing, observing and applying a code of ethics.

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